CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for identifying the presence of an item to a user interface comprising the steps of:

   a. using a container having a loading opening and a collection opening;

   b. passing the item through the loading opening activating a first sensor;

   c. sending a first signal from the first sensor to an intelligent device;

   d. creating a first intelligent device signal from the intelligent device;

   e. communicating the first intelligent device signal to a communication system, wherein said communication system is selected from the group: radio, cellular, fiber optic, satellite, and wires;

   f. opening the collection opening to collect the item, thereby activating a second sensor;

   g. sending a second signal from the second sensor to the intelligent device;

   h. creating a second intelligent device signal from the intelligent device;

   i. communicating the second intelligent device signal to the communication system; and

   j. using a software interface to process the first intelligent device signal and the second intelligent device signal and present the first intelligent device signal and the second intelligent device signal processed by the software interface to the user interface by a member of the group: the Internet, Intranet, phone, fax, and pager.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the item used is a package.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using one opening as the loading opening and the collection opening.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the first intelligent device signal and second intelligent device signal are sent to an antenna prior to being sent to the software interface.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the intelligent device buffers the signal from the first sensor prior to communicating the first intelligent device signal.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the intelligent device is a remote terminal unit (RTU).

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the second sensor is manually operated to indicate the collection opening has been opened.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the user is a member of the group: shipping company, trucking company, medical waste disposal company, video entertainment service company, drug store, library, grocery store, and post office.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said container is a member of the group: a common carrier drop box, a group mail collection site, a federal post office box, and private postal box.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using a third sensor to ascertain the weight of the item in the container and wherein the third sensor is in communication with the intelligent device and the intelligent device is adapted to provide a weight notification to the user interface.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of analyzing container sensor activity.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using a fourth sensor to ascertain whether the container has been tampered with and wherein the fourth sensor is in communication with the intelligent device and the intelligent device is adapted to provide a tampered with notification to the user interface.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using a fifth sensor for detecting hazardous materials and wherein the fifth sensor is in communication with the intelligent device and the intelligent device is adapted to provide a hazardous material notification to the user interface.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein steps (b) through (d) are repeated at least one time before continuing to step (e).

15. The method of claim 1, wherein steps (b) and (c) are repeated at least one time before continuing to step (d).

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using a counter with the intelligent device to store sensor activity and report to the user interface on a timed basis.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication system is selected from the group: Internet, intranet, LAN, and peer-to-peer network.